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SUBJECT: BURMA GROUP OF FRIENDS MINISTERIAL

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¶1. (SBU) Secretary-General Ban convened a high-level meeting of the Burma Group of Friends on September 27 attended by Indonesian Foreign Minister Wirajuda, Japanese Foreign Minister Nakasone, EU High Representative Solana, Vietnamese DPM and Foreign Minister Khiem, UK Foreign Secretary Miliband, French Minister of State Jouyet, Chinese DPR Liu, Singaporean Foreign Minister Yeo, Norwegian DPR Juul, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Yakovenko, ROK PR Park In-kook, Australian PR Hill, Thai Deputy Permanent Secretary Santaputra, Indian Foreign Secretary Menon, and ASEAN Secretary-General Pitsuwan.

¶2. (SBU) Special Advisor Gambari commented that the recent release of several political prisoners was a "good first step," but more needed to be done. He challenged the group to "deploy efforts" to improve the situation in Burma individually and collectively and to encourage Aung Sun Suu Kyi to remain engaged with the United Nations. Secretary-General Ban shared his frustration with the slow progress in Burma but maintained that both his visit to Burma and Gambari's several visits "had successes," including allowing for a dialogue between ASSK and the regime. SYG Ban told the group that he spoke with the Burmese Foreign Minister Nyan Win earlier that day and explained the need for cooperation with the UN. He also cautioned Win against disappointing the international community and pressed him to release ASSK. According to Ban, FM Win said he would convey Ban's message to the regime. Finally, SYG Ban asked the Friends to "capitalize on goodwill" demonstrated by the recent release of prisoners and stressed the need for unity among members. He told the group that Gambari's recent visit was not a failure -- failure would be giving up.

¶3. (SBU) The Friends reiterated positions similar to the previous Friends meeting (reftel). Chinese DPR also highlighted the need for economic development in order for democracy to flourish. ASEAN members continued to emphasize slow progress and patience. ASEAN SYG Pitsuwan appealed for more support to assist in cyclone assistance and remarked that ASEAN is there "to create an umbrella for Burma to accept international assistance." UK FS Miliband stressed support for SYG Ban and his role (but did not mention Gambari). Ambassador DiCarlo stressed the need for the regime to release political prisoners, including ASSK, and pursue a genuine dialogue. All members again expressed support for the good offices mission. The U.S. and Norway cautioned that a possible Ban visit to the regime should be tied to concrete results from the regime. SYG Ban said he intended to release a statement after the meeting reflecting the group's discussion (full text below). Russian DFM Yakovenko asked that the statement include a reference noting the regime's progress, which was strongly rebuffed by Ambassador DiCarlo, France, UK and Australia.

¶4. (SBU) Begin Secretary-General Ban's statement:

Today, the Secretary-General convened and chaired the first high-level meeting of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General on Myanmar. This was the sixth meeting of the Group since it was established in December 2007.

The Secretary-General thanks all the Friends for their high-level participation in a useful and constructive discussion. He also welcome the participation by the ministers from several concerned countries as well as by the Secretary-General of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the High Representative of the European Union, in today's meeting. This is a clear signal of the importance that the international community attaches to the situation in Myanmar.

The members of the Group were unanimous in expressing their continued strong support for the Secretary-General's good offices mission and for its implementation through his Special Advisor, Ibrahim Gambari.

While noting the recent actions taken by the Government of Myanmar, members of the Group also further encouraged it to work more closely with and respond more positively with the United Nations good offices to address key issues of concern to the international community, especially the release of political prisoners, including Daw Aung Sun Suu Kyi, and the initiation of an all-inclusive dialogue between the Government and the opposition.

Members of the Group encouraged all parties in Myanmar to seize the opportunity of the United Nations good offices, while stressing the responsibility of the Myanmar Government

USUN NEW Y 00000892 002 OF 002

to demonstrate its stated commitment to cooperation with the good offices mission through further tangible results.

End Statement.

Note: Most members did not express strong support for Gambari but for the SYG and his good offices mission.  
Khalilzad